

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 EB-07 TRSE-00 IO-13 EUR-12 /092 W

-----161334Z 016483 /40

R 160943Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3492

INFO USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 1375

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, BM

SUBJ: NE WIN'S VISIT TO PRC

SUMMARY. PRESIDENT NE WIN'S TRIP TO CHINA APPARENTLY PRODUCED LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE. THE LACK OF A JOINT COMMUNIQUE DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN, BUT SUGGESTS, THAT THE TRIP WAS A FAILURE IN TERMS OF REDUCING PRC SUPPORT FOR THE BCP OR GETTING SIGNIFICANT NEW ECONOMIC AID. RAPID RESOLUTION OF THE BCP ISSUE, AT LEAST, NOW SEEMS EVEN LESS LIKELY THAN BEFORE. CORDIALITY OF THE CHINESE OFFERS NO CLEAR INDICATION ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. IT MAY BE NO MORE THAN A SUPERFICIAL RESPONSE TO THE EFFUSIVE TREATMENT ACCORDED MADAM CHOU BY THE GUB ON HER RECENT VISIT. IT DOES NOT, HOWEVER, SUGGEST A RADICAL DETERIORATION IN BURMA/CHINA RELATIONS. NE WIN MAY NOW HOPE THAT THE GRADUAL ACCUMULATION OF GOODWILL WILL IN TIME FURTHER REDUCE PRC SUPPORT OF THE BCP. WHILE THE LENGTH OF THE VISIT WAS LARGELY FOR SYMBOLIC AND PROTOCOL REASONS, IT DID GIVE NE WIN A CLOSE LOOK AT THE PRC SYSTEM. WHETHER THE EX-POSURE WILL AGAIN (AS IN 1975, BRIEFLY) INSPIRE HIM WITH A NEW ZEAL TO BUILD SOCIALISM, AND IF SO HOW MUCH HARM THIS WILL DO, IT IS TOO EARLY TO SAY. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT NE WIN, HIS WIFE AND PARTY RETURNED FROM A
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TWO WEEK STAY IN CHINA ON MAY 12. HE STAYED SO LONG BECAUSE THE PRETEXT FOR THE VISIT WAS MAO'S SUGGESTION IN 1975 THAT HE COME AGAIN AND STAY LONGER, AND BECAUSE OF THE LENGTH OF MME CHOU'S VISIT LAST FEBRUARY. ON THIS, NE WIN'S NINTH AND LONGEST VISIT, THE PRESIDENT SPENT FIVE DAYS IN PEKING CONFERRING WITH HUA KUO-FENG, VICE PREMIER LI HSIEN NIEN AND OTHER PRC LEADERS. FOLLOWING THESE TALKS, THE BURMESE DELE-

GATION TOURED HISTORICAL AND INDUSTRIAL SITES IN CHINA, INCLUDING MAO'S BIRTHPLACE, THE TACHAI AGRICULTURAL SHOWPLACE, AND THE TACHING OILFIELD.

2. THERE WAS NO JOINT COMMUNIQUE, UNLIKE NE WIN'S LAST TRIP TO PEKING IN NOVEMBER 1975. THE LACK OF A COMMUNIQUE DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT NO PROGRESS WAS MADE ON THE BCP ISSUE, BUT IT IS NOT AN AUSPICIOUS OMEN. WHILE NO EXPLICIT REFERENCE TO THE BCP WOULD HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT IN ANY CASE, HAD THERE BEEN REAL PROGRESS, ONE COULD HAVE EXPECTED SOME LANGUAGE SUGGESTIVE OF THE FACT-- E.G., A STRONG BURMESE CONDEMNATION OF "HEGEMONY", A STRONG PRC ENDORSEMENT OF "NON-INTERFERENCE". IN FACT, AFTER A ROUTINE NOD TO THE FIVE PRINCIPLES AT THE START OF THE VISIT, NOTHING MORE WAS SAID ABOUT NON-INTERFERENCE. SIMILARLY, WHILE THERE WERE PASSING REFERENCES TO HEGEMONY BY THE CHINESE EARLY ON, THIS TOO QUICKLY DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT. LACK OF MENTION OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE MAY INDICATE THAT IN THIS FIELD TOO HOPED-FOR PROGRESS DID NOT OCCUR. WHILE IT MAY, OF COURSE, TURN OUT THAT THE VISIT PAVED THE WAY FOR MORE SPECIFIC, WORKING-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS AT A LATER DATE, WE HAVE AS YET NO BASIS FOR EXPECTING THAT.

3. IN CONTRAST WITH THE APPARENT LACK OF SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS, THE CHINESE PUT ON A DISPLAY OF CORDIALITY THAT HAS BEEN PLAYED BACK LOCALLY THROUGH AMPLIFIERS. THIS WAS IN PART--ON THE BURMESE SIDE--PROBABLY AN ATTEMPT TO BALANCE THE ALMOST EMBARRASSINGLY LAVISH HOSPITALITY THE GUB EXTENDED TO MADAME CHOU EN-LAI LAST FEBRUARY, IN PART AN

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ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL THE LACK OF REAL PROGRESS, AND IN PART A TACTIC DESIGNED TO KEEP THE DOOR OPEN TO REAL PROGRESS WHENEVER THIS BECOMES POSSIBLE. THE BURMESE MAY ALSO FEEL THAT THE DISPLAY OF CORDIALITY, NO MATTER HOW SUPERFICIAL, MAY BE AT LEAST A LITTLE DISHEARTENING TO THE BCP.

4. THE TRIP MAY HAVE SOME IMPACT ON BURMA'S DOMESTIC POLICY, BUT WE ARE NOT SURE IN WHICH DIRECTION. THE LAST TIME NE WIN VISITED CHINA HE RETURNED SO IMPRESSED WITH CHINA'S PROGRESS THAT HE WAS, REPORTEDLY, INSPIRED TO HAVE ANOTHER GO AT BUILDING SOCIALISM ALL THE WAY IN BURMA (CF. RANGOON'S A-018 OF 9 MARCH 1976). THE PRO-CHINESE COLORATION OF THIS PRESIDENTIAL MOOD OF LATE 1975 INITIALLY ALARMED THOSE BSPP "HARDLINERS" WHO HAVE GENERALLY LOOKED TOWARD EASTERN EUROPE FOR THEIR INSPIRATION, BUT IT MAY HAVE EVENTUALLY PLAYED INTO THEIR HANDS. AT ANY RATE, THE MURKY TUG-OF-WAR BETWEEN PRAGMATIC ECONOMIC POLICIES AND SOCIALIST ORTHODOXY FINDS THE ORTHODOX (AND BLOC-INSPIRED) ELEMENT A BIT AHEAD. WILL THIS LONGER LOOK AT PRC ACCOM-

PLISHMENTS SPUR THE MERCURIAL NE WIN INTO A NEW BURST OF
SOCIALIST ZEAL, TO THE DETRIMENT OF HOPES FOR ECONOMIC
REFORM, OR WILL THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF HIS HOPES FOR
PROGRESS ON THE BCP ISSUE PUT HIM IN A PESSIMISTIC MOOD
TO RETRENCH? IT IS HARD TO SAY AT THIS POINT.
OSBORN

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Message Attributes

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